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Chapter 7

‘Enjoying country life to the full – only the English know how to do that!’: appreciation of the British country house by Hungarian aristocratic travellers

Kristof Fatsar

Introduction

Britain was the most attractive new travel destination for Hungarian aristocrats[1] towards the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. This phenomenon followed continental fashion, as the achievements of the British agricultural as well as the industrial revolution attracted nobility and professionals from all over the Continent, and from Hungary too, to study the new methods first hand.[2] Naturally, different levels of Hungarian society had different agenda when travelling. Country house tourism was an activity pursued with various interests based on the difference in wealth, upbringing, cultural involvement and so on. Nevertheless, it was followed by intellectuals who were more likely to share their experiences with the wider public in written form. In that sense, it is better recorded than the experiences of others who travelled to Britain for commercial or other more down-to-earth purposes.

Regrettably, there are no reliable data to judge the percentage of noblemen or intellectuals from the early period of visits to Britain. As more frequent travel started only in the 1780s when obtaining a passport, as well as crossing the continent and travel in general, was still very

[1] Hungarian aristocrats were the equivalent of British peers, although there were neither viscounts nor marquesses in Hungarian nobility. A traditional concept of Hungarian nobility included untitled members of the lower nobility, from whom aristocrats were often distinguished by being called ‘magnates’. Princely title was usually held by only one male member of a family and all other family members were styled counts (like the Batthyánys). There was only one family, namely the ducal branch of the Esterházys, whose members were all styled princes or princesses by the end of the 18th century. (The other family lines of the Esterházys were all in the rank of counts.) All members of other Hungarian aristocratic families were styled barons or baronesses, counts or countesses, according to their sexes.

[2] See G. Kurucz, ‘Tanulmányúton Nyugat-Európában: Gerics Pál georgikoni tanár angliai levelei gróf Festetics Lászlóhoz’, *Agrártörténeti Szemle* XXXIX (1997), no. 3–4, pp. 655–724; K. Fatsar, 'Bless’d Isle Admired: the English countryside as a reflection of economic power in the first half of the 19th Century', in I. Dymitryszyn, M. Kaczyńska and G. Maksymiuk (eds), *Proceedings of ECLAS 2012 Conference ‘The Power of Landscape’* (Warsaw: Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW, 2012), pp. 154-158; L. Országh, „Anglomania” in Hungary, 1780–1900, *The New Hungarian Quarterly XXII*, no. 82 (1981), pp. 168–179.

difficult, we can rightly assume that these early travellers were almost exclusively from the higher classes. Records of alien arrivals to Britain are available only from 1836 onwards and they give a much clearer picture about the number of Hungarian aristocrats travelling there, albeit from a much later period when travel to Britain was already widespread. Even then, the problem with identifying Hungarian aristocrats, or Hungarian tourists in general, in the records from the period before the 1848 Revolution is that tourists often did not identify themselves as Hungarians, or were refused to be recognised as such by British Custom Houses. Many Hungarian magnates actually resided in Vienna for a large part of the year and this probably made their national background even more obscure. A random search on family names shows that a substantial number of the Hungarian nobility was recorded as Austrians. Interestingly, and probably along with the ever increasing patriotic feelings during the first half of the nineteenth century, sometimes a particular individual was recorded first as Austrian and at a later visit as Hungarian.[3]

Leaving aside the obvious shortcomings of such research, the records still provide a valuable dataset to understand the extent of Hungarian tourism to Britain in the 1830s and 1840s. According to these, Hungarian tourists to Britain numbered around fifty per annum between 1837 and 1844, with the exception of 1839 with more than sixty people (Chart 7.1). A sharp rise in visits started in 1845 culminating in more than a hundred people by 1847, followed by a steep decline during the revolutionary year of 1848. The number of aristocrats did not follow any pattern, the norm being between five and ten, with a record low of only one recorded visitor in 1846. Extending the privileged class to include the lower nobility, and for the sake of simplicity adding the entourage of the aristocrats as well, the numbers are more steady, making up between the third and the half of all visitors to Britain. It is interesting to see that there were proportionally large numbers of people of more humble origin who visited the British Isles towards the middle of the nineteenth century, despite the great geographical distance, although their movement was helped by increasingly easier transport. Perhaps less surprisingly,

[3] This part of the research was carried out by an electronic search engine provided by The National Archives at Kew. It searched digitised records, the originals having been transcribed. As both the original and the transcribed records suffered some miswriting, I have searched for the words Ungarn, Hongrie and Transylvania besides Hungary, but even found records with entries like Hungaria, Hongarn, Hungrie, the most peculiar transcription probably being Angara. The bulk of the data comes from two sections of the Public Record Office at The National Archives at Kew, namely the Foreign Office Lists of aliens arriving at English ports and the Home Office: Aliens act 1836 Certificates of Arrival of Aliens.

intellectuals from commoner families like medical doctors, university professors, lawyers or members of the clergy numbered between 10 and 15 per annum, with a similar number of merchants and tradesmen. Craftsmen, including gardeners on study tour to British country houses, numbered between five and ten in most years, and a handful of artists, including the celebrated pianist Franz Liszt, add to the overall picture of visitors.

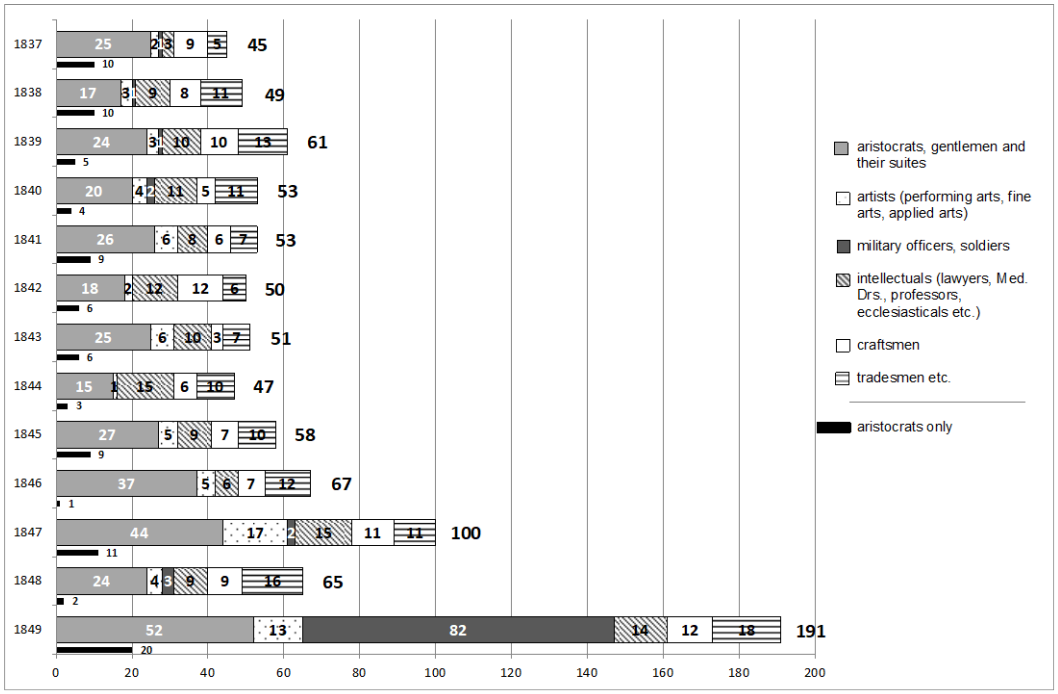

Chart 7.1. Hungarian visitors to Britain, 1837-1849, by social group

Although many of these tourists visited country houses while in Britain, they focused on different things. Aristocrats like Count Ferenc Széchényi (1754-1820) or Baron Miklós Wesselényi (1796-1850) were more interested in country houses and their gardens as a way of living. The British country house was the object of envy, for it represented the ultimate estate residence, even for rather wealthy Hungarian landlords like Wesselényi, author of the dictum in the title of this chapter, who also believed that "it is not possible to imagine anything more tasteful than an English country house in the middle of the flourishing green velvet lawn of a park".[4] Others with more social concern and less estate property paid greater attention to public

[4] Wesselényi was inspired to write this remark upon visiting Richard Wilson's Bildeston House in Suffolk, see

buildings and parks. Impoverished and untitled noblemen with university education in the law like Bertalan Szemere (1812-1869), the Prime Minister of Hungary in 1849, István Gorove (1819-1881), Minister in the first Hungarian government after the Compromise with Austria in 1867, or Lőrinc Tóth (1814-1903), future Member of the House of Magnates in the Hungarian Parliament, were all very influential members of Hungarian society during the so-called Reform Era that preceded the 1848 Revolution, and consequently all sentenced to death *in absentia* following its defeat. Their influence was not limited to their sparkling public speeches during the turbulent years that ultimately led to the Revolution but they also published their travel notes in order to educate the Hungarian public about fairer political systems, law enforcement, public finance, or social institutions. They visited other advanced countries of north-western Europe, but in most things they placed Britain as an example of best practice. They also visited a few country houses and parks to experience and introduce the lifestyle of the wealthiest peers of Britain, and to reflect on domestic architecture, landscape design and art collections of the highest quality. Their description of the visited country houses and parks were written in a tone of praise. Aristocrats, on the other hand, were occasionally critical to some of their country house experiences in their own very private travel journals; they were probably more educated in the subject but they also did not have to control their views, as their journals were not intended to be published. In contrast with the less wealthy and less privileged, aristocrats often visited a string of British country houses, not as places for discovery of the arts but to visit friends or even relatives with whom they maintained amiable relationships just as much as with other continental counterparts.

The key to this phenomenon is access to the British nobility and their houses, which was facilitated by a number of factors that this paper aims to identify. It also aims to demonstrate that the changing travel destinations of the aristocracy between the end of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century was not only determined by a change of taste and other external drivers, but again by personal circumstances, or in other words, by access. It attempts to do so in the context of international country house tourism in the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, but also bringing in views of non-aristocratic yet educated and influential Hungarian travel writers, and drawing on the background of country house experiences of Hungarian aristocrats and the broader polite society in general. It will reaffirm the notion that the English country house did indeed enjoy special attention, but will also help

Báró Wesselényi Miklós útinaplója 1821–1822 (Cluj-Kolozsvár: Concordia, 1925).

in understanding the reasons behind such favoured views of them.

Periods of Hungarian tourism to Britain and their sources

There were two distinct periods of expansive travel from Hungary to Britain in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, separated by a third, intermediate period during the Napoleonic Wars that can mainly be characterised by a low number of rare entries. The early period can practically be reduced to a roughly fifteen-year period between the late 1770s and early 1790s. We are only aware of very occasional journeys in the preceding decades, or even centuries, but the industrial and the agricultural revolutions as well as the taste for the naturalistic garden that was simply called the 'English garden' in the German-speaking realm, to which Hungarian intellectual circles practically belonged, attracted a growing number of Hungarian tourists on the eve of the French Revolution.[5] There were several notable travellers, among them aristocrats. Unfortunately, this early period is not characterised by a wealth of sources. The only published account of a journey to Britain was written by a widely travelled member of the lower gentry, István Sándor (1750–1815), who visited England in 1786 and anonymously published his observations on Western Europe in a series of fictional letters to his friend in 1793.[6] Having neither the necessary connections nor the financial background to visit famous country houses in the already infamously expensive country, his journey did not extend much beyond London.

Travel writings on Britain by aristocrats, as opposed to those reform-minded gentlemen mentioned above, did not exert any influence on Hungarian society as none of them were published during the lifetime of their authors. Some of them, written by the most important historical figures of the country, were published much later, typically between the two world wars. As far as the early aristocratic travellers are concerned, only one of them deserved such attention. Count Ferenc Széchényi (1754–1820), founder of the Hungarian National Museum by giving his collections to the nation in 1802, wrote not only a travel journal but also lengthy observations and even analyses of the things he saw while travelling in the west of Europe. An abridged version of his travel journal already came out in the inter-war period,[7] and his travel

[5] A study on Hungarian garden tourism during this period with particular attention to the appreciation of the landscapes created by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716–1783) is K. Fatsar, 'Hungarian Garden Tourists in Search of Lancelot Brown's Legacy', *Garden History* 44 (2016), Suppl. 1. 114–124.

[6] [I. Sándor,] *Egy külföldön utazó magyarnak jó barátjához küldetett levelei* (Győr: Streibig, 1793).

[7] H. Marczali, Gróf Széchenyi [sic] Ferenc utazásai Angliában (1787), *Budapesti Szemle*, Vol. 220 (1931), 638:

continued to attract scholarly attention, although an article on Count Széchényi's visits to English country house gardens missed some of his garden destinations and descriptions.[8] The other aristocratic traveller from this period who left a detailed travel journal behind is Baron Miklós Vay (1756–1824), whose notes are not published yet, and the otherwise excellent study on him focused on things other than his country house visits.[9]

It has been long recognised that for eighteenth-century continental visitors the main attraction of the British country house was its park and pleasure ground, or at least they were considered just as noteworthy as the house and its collections. This was the case for Hungarian tourists, too, who had the first real chance to experience 'proper' English gardens while travelling to Britain. István Sándor was also an advocate of the new landscape style although, due to his modest circumstances, he did not have a chance to see internationally known examples of the English landscape garden other than public parks of London.[10] He did not see private residences in England, but on the Continent he visited royal or princely gardens open to the public such as Versailles in France or Nymphenburg in Bavaria.[11]

There was a long pause in Hungarian tourism after the French revolution and during the Napoleonic wars. The borders of the Habsburg Monarchy remained more or less closed for a quarter of a century. We know of only a few travellers to Britain during this period, mainly from the early nineteenth century that saw a few years of peace. Prince Miklós Esterházy (1765–1833) with a small company of family members travelled to England as an excursion from Paris in the summer of 1803, but quite frustratingly, the writer of the journal, probably one of the two sisters of the prince who accompanied him, wrote almost nothing about the more than two month long journey there.[12] Just a few years later another Esterházy family member,

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26–50 and 639: 224–248; H. Marczali, Gróf Széchenyi [sic] Ferenc utazásai, *Budapesti Szemle*, Vol. 240 (1836), 699: 129–151 and 700: 291– 323.

[8] J. Sisa, 'Count Ferenc Széchényi's Visit to English Parks and Gardens in 1787', *Garden History* 22 (1994), no. 1, 64–71.

[9] O. Szakály, *Egy vállalkozó főnemes: Vay Miklós báró (1756–1824)*, [Budapest:] ELTE Eötvös Kiadó, 2003.

[10] On the perception of the landscape garden movement in Hungary and its consequences on adapting new garden fashions see K. Fatsar, 'European Travelers and the Transformation of Garden Art in Hungary at the Turn of the 19th Century', *Studies in the History and of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 36 (2016), no. 3, 166–184.

[11] J. Papp, *Művészeti ismeretek gróf [sic] Sándor István (1750-1815) írásaiban*, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1992, 30–37.

[12] Hungarian National Archives, P 115–III.–a–9. See also S. Körner, *Nikolaus II Esterhazy (1765-1833) und die Kunst: Biografie eines manischen Sammlers* (Wien: Böhlau, 2012), pp. 126, 135–144.

and supposedly a princess again, namely Leopoldine Esterházy (1788–1846), daughter of Prince Miklós, kept a journal of a tour across Western Europe in 1806 and 1807, listing several country houses of England, discussed below, with a principal interest in parks and gardens, on which the journal records lengthy notes.[13]

A second wave of Hungarian tourists to Britain came following end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The interest of Hungarian aristocrats was fuelled not only by their ever-increasing admiration for British commerce, industry, social and public institutions, but by their desire to engage with British trade. The Hungarian aristocracy benefitted from the high demand for food during the war years and wanted to make their estates even more profitable by studying the wool industry, agricultural machinery and the like. As far as the British country house is concerned, a clear change of interests can be observed between these two periods. Instead of great examples of the landscape garden, nineteenth-century Hungarian aristocratic tourists were attracted by the comfort of the English country house. These interests were in line with other high-ranking continental visitors'. Among them was Archduke John of Austria who travelled in Britain in 1815 and 1816. His main purpose was to study and learn, and thus visited many industrial facilities, including coal mines and quarries, salt mines and porcelain factories, whisky distilleries and glass manufacturers, paper mills and steel factories. Architecture as such was not his main preference but, as he was often a guest in great houses, he occasionally recorded impressions of the comfort of the English country house. However, he also noted the often prevailing draughtiness of country houses.[14]

This change of interest regarding the British country house has already been identified and explored by József Sisa, who also gave plenty of examples of the influence that the British country house exerted on their Hungarian equivalents.[15] No doubt, Hungarian country house owners possessed architectural treatises of the latest fashion and relied on the services of able

[13] Hungarian National Archives, P 115–III.–a–7.

[14] E. Hammer-Luza, '"Stündlich erwarte ich meinen Aufbruch…" – Reisen im Leben von Erzherzog Johann', in A. Ableitinger and M. Brunner (eds), *Erzherzog Johann von Österreich*, *"Ein Land, wo ich viel gesehen.": Auf dem Tagebuch der England-Reise 1815/16*, pp.45–61, here pp.59–60.

[15] J. Sisa, 'The 'English Garden' and the Comfortable House: British Influences in Nineteenth-Century Hungary, in G. Ernyey (ed.), *Britain and Hungary: Contacts in Architecture and Design during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Hungarian University of Craft and Design, 1999), pp.71–94; J. Sisa, 'Mansions under the Spell of the „Olden Times": Country House Building in the English Style', *Ars* 42 (2009), no. 2, 206–215.

architects, but their first hand experiences must have shaped their taste and expectation for their own house and garden. The identification of their travel destinations is therefore of no little significance.

Drawing up a list of country house destinations presents a familiar challenge: sources are limited. Nevertheless, there are more aristocratic travel journals available from the first half of the century than from the previous period. Again, some of them were published in the twentieth century, like the entire diary of Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860), son of the above mentioned Count Ferenc and leader of the Hungarian reform movement from the 1820s until the 1848 Revolution, that came out between the two world wars,[16] as did his friend's and company's on his 1822 tour to England, the already cited Baron Miklós Wesselényi's travel journal of the same tour.[17] Besides these few publications all other sources remained in manuscript form (the only published aristocratic travel journal is about a tour to Italy[18]); but even these are not too numerous. Probably more existed but were lost during the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century; some were never written. In this respect it is particularly unfortunate that we are not aware of journals by Prince Pál Antal Esterházy (1786-1866), who was Ambassador of the Austrian Empire to the Court of Saint James's between 1815 and 1842. During his very long tenure he visited many country houses in Britain, and also received many British travellers in his principal country seat in Hungary, Eisenstadt. He was also responsible for introducing many Hungarians, mainly aristocrats of course, to British peers and even royalty, and in consequence they were kindly received in many country houses across the British Isles. Consequently, he was the key person to provide access to British country houses for Hungarian aristocrats that resulted in a very different pattern of travel destination compared to those gentleman tourists who followed the usual recommendations of travel guides.

Early Hungarian aristocratic travellers to Britain and their country house visits

By the time Hungarian aristocrats started visiting Britain in any number, country house owners were feeling the need to protect their property from ‘mass tourism’ and its inconvenient

[16] G. Viszota (ed.), *Gróf Széchenyi István naplói* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1925–1939); Gróf Széchenyi István összes munkái, Vols. 10-15.

[17] *Báró Wesselényi Miklós útinaplója 1821–1822*, Cluj-Kolzsvár: Concordia,1925

[18] Countess Antalné Csáky née Baroness Anna Vécsey, *Utazási vázlatok Olaszországról*, Pest: Geibel, 1843.

consequences, not excluding theft and vandalism.[19] Based on the assumptions on Hungarian tourist numbers, they did not make much difference, although the two early aristocratic visitors I have already introduced in large part followed the usual travel routes of 'ordinary' tourists. Neither Baron Miklós Vay nor Count Ferenc Széchényi had many connections to their British counterparts, so it is not surprising that they were seldom received by country house owners. They also had limited knowledge of Britain, which explains why they expressed awe at most things they saw. Although their background and circumstances were quite different, their journeys show some remarkable overlap particularly in terms of the country houses visited.

Baron Miklós Vay started his journey in 1786 and stayed in Britain for a year and a half. He was of Protestant background and with modest means. This is why he was not close to the inner circles of the imperial court and the Viennese society of Hungarian magnates. He was therefore determined to pursue a military career and he eventually became general as a military engineer. Nevertheless, his long journey was partly financed by the state because of the useful information he provided; in other words, he was spying on British military and industrial establishments. He sent lengthy reports to Vienna and also kept a diary for himself. Being an engineer, he was most interested in both military and civil constructions, and he also very much appreciated their creators, engineers, architects and landscape designers, mentioning the names of Sir John Vanbrugh, Sir William Chambers and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown when describing country houses. He was a real entrepreneur and upon his return he initiated several businesses in Hungary, most of them failing. He built up debts with his travel and he had to trade his stone house with his brother's wooden house to overcome his financial difficulties. This also means he could not really utilise the experience he gained in Britain as far as his own home is concerned.

Count Ferenc Széchényi, on the other hand, was wealthy and his estates lay much closer to Vienna; at the end of his life he was created a Knight of the Golden Fleece, the highest possible distinction for a subject in the Habsburg Empire. He travelled with his wife, née Countess Julianna Festetics, and his personal assistant. They spent only four months in Britain and Széchényi was just as interested in technology as Baron Vay. He took notes on and even drew

[19] A. Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: Four Centuries of Country House Visiting* (London: The National Trust, 1998), pp.88-94, gives a vivid overview of the frustration of country house owners and the measure taken to channel tourism during this period. Wilton was visited by thousands per year in the middle of the 1770s, while around 900 people per year saw Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill between May and September each year in the 1780s and 1790s.

the machines he saw into his travel journal, but he was also interested in architecture and garden design, transforming his formal garden in Nagycenk into the naturalistic style upon his return. Like many of his contemporaries, he was a true Anglomaniac, although he was very much aware of shortcomings in British society, which he analysed in his notes. He was astonished by the freedom that British parliament and the citizens enjoyed – something unimaginable for Hungarian subjects. According to Széchényi, a British gentleman is ready to show his country house and park to a foreigner, and although all foreigners are believed to be French and looked down on for this reason, just like the Romans who consider everybody a Barbaric if not Roman, nonetheless, British gentlemen are very courteous towards foreigners.

Comparing the sites visited by Vay and Széchényi, one can notice some remarkable similarities. Although they both visited around a dozen country houses, as many as five of them were seen by both: Wanstead House, Painshill Park, Blenheim, Stowe and Kedleston Hall (see Chapter 6 for comparisons with the places visited by Dutch travellers).[20] Blenheim Palace was an all-time favourite, visited by most Hungarian aristocrats and by nearly all other gentleman travellers. Its popularity was partly due to the fact that it is at a very close distance to Oxford, which a few decades later was recommended as one of the two places (the other one being Canterbury) to visit in England outside London if one is to stay more than a month in Britain.[21] The same is true of Wanstead House, as it is conveniently close to London to visit as a one-day excursion, although it was more popular in the eighteenth than in the nineteenth century. Stowe and particularly Painshill, on the other hand, were the archetypical garden tourism destinations of the eighteenth century. They were advertised by C. C. L. Hirschfeld's most influential work, *The Theory of Garden Art*, published in five volumes between 1779 and 1785, a title that was known to practically all great garden patrons of Hungary.[22] Kedleston Hall was another popular

[20] Vay also visited Windsor Castle, Wilton House, Mount Edgecumbe House, Nuneham Courtney, The Leasowes, Chatsworth House, Knowsley Hall in England and Marino Villa and Powerscourt House when he travelled to Dublin. Széchényi also went to the London royal gardens of Kensington and Kew, Boughton Park, Boughton House, Wollaton Hall and Rokeby Park. In addition, he mentioned several others that he either missed or saw only from a distance while en route, like Chatsworth, Harewood House, Aske Hall, Acorn Bank, Netherby Hall, Bank House or Alkrington Hall.

[21] J. F. Neigebauer, *Handbuch für Reisende in England* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1829), p.17.

[22] On Painshill: C. C. L. Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: M. G. Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1780), pp.178–182; on the temples of Stowe: Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst*, Vol. 3 (Leipzig: M. G. Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1780), pp.61–67.

destination, not least because of the welcoming reception that the tourist could enjoy.[23] It was visited by both Vay and Széchényi, but they noticed different things. While the former praised the beautiful layout of the park, the latter admired mainly the house, describing and even judging many architectural details of both appearance and arrangement, noting that 'Mr. Adam was the architect of this beautiful country house. ... Otherwise much cleanliness rules all over the house, although not much splendour'.[24] He also took notes of paintings in the houses he visited. Their views diverged even more in the case of Blenheim and Stowe. Széchényi preferred Blenheim and wrote in his journal that 'the Duke is a garden connoisseur with taste … and constantly makes changes in the garden', whilst at Stowe 'the views in this park I did not like as much as the ones in Blenheim. The objects are too densely placed, the temples and statues are of ordinary materials and are not artistic'.[25] Vay, on the other hand, who also visited Blenheim first and Stowe on the following day, wrote that 'Stowe is in many respects more beautiful than Blenheim. … The park is full with the most beautiful buildings that are well arranged'.[26] In that regard, Széchényi represented a more recent notion on landscape design whereas Vay's views were old-fashioned; Széchényi must have been more educated in landscape design as owner of several country house gardens.[27]

The remaining sites were partly chosen for chance access to them. Count Széchényi arranged visits to Boughton House and Boughton Park; was shown around in the house and gardens by the owner at Wollaton Hall, and invited to Rokeby Park. He probably met the owners in London before he started his country journey. Baron Vay, on the other hand, did not perhaps have many friends in the highest circles, although as a Fellow of the Royal Society he must have known important people. Doors opened for him, however, when Archduke Ferdinand of Austria made a visit to England and Vay found himself in his entourage. He visited Nuneham Courtney and

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[23] Tinniswood, *Polite Tourist*, pp.102–105.

[24] Hungarian National Archives, P 623, Vol. I, No. 12/9, f. 276v.

[25] Hungarian National Archives, P 623, Vol. I, No. 12/9, ff. 232r, 232v.

[26] Vay's landscape and garden descriptions were kindly provided by the his biographer, Orsolya Szakály. The original manuscript is in the care of the Reformed College of Sárospatak, Hungary.

[27] Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys recorded in 1775 that by that time the garden buildings were generally thought to be too numerous; however, she observed that the plantations are mature enough to obscure many of them properly, so not seeing several of them from the same point diminshes the negative effects of density, see E. Climenson, *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys of Hardwick House, Oxon, A. D. 1756 to 1808* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), pp. 154–155. In that respect, Széchényi might have echoed the popular opinion of conoisseurs while Vay relied on his own experiences, just as Lybbe Powys did.

other estates in the company of the Archduke and thus had access to notable country estates.

The travel of Princess Leopoldine Esterházy with her newly-wed husband Prince Moritz von Liechtenstein in 1806 still belongs to the early period as far as country house destinations are concerned. They did not visit Painshill or The Leasowes, but their itinerary still listed iconic sites of the English landscape gardening movement like Stowe or even more surprisingly Alexander Pope's almost forgotten house and grotto in Twickenham. Their impressions of the British country house are very positive with only a few and minor critical remarks.[28] Széchényi, on the other hand, was not impressed by contemporary British domestic architecture that in general lacked taste and durability in his opinion, although he also very much approved of the country houses (as opposed to urban buildings), which he considered beautiful and made to last. He was interested in garden features and many aspects of both pleasure grounds and kitchen gardens, but although he improved his gardens, he did not intend to change his own country house. The desire for changing the layout, spatial arrangement and details of the Hungarian country house waited for the next generation of Hungarian aristocratic travellers to Britain.

Country house tourism by Hungarian aristocrats in the first half of the 19th century

A party of illustrious participants at the Congress of Vienna left the imperial capital to engage in sporting activities in November 1814. Among them were the British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of Saxon–Weimar–Eisenach, Eugen de Beauharnais or Prince Leopold of Bourbon–Two Sicilies. They went to the Hungarian country seat of the Esterházy princes in Kismarton (modern Eisenstadt in Austria) for a two-days shooting of the best of its sort.[29] The host was Prince Pál Antal Esterházy, heir of the reigning Prince Miklós, who became Ambassador of the Austrian Empire to London in the following year, a role he was to keep for decades until 1842. Both this event and subsequently other shooting parties in Eisenstadt had far-reaching consequences. The then 28 years old Prince Pál Antal Esterházy had started his diplomatic career in England eight years before as Secretary at the London embassy for a short period of time, and he was just ready to take up more prestigious and permanent positions. He eventually became Foreign Minister (Minister besides the King, as it was called that time) in

[28] They visited Burghley House, Castle Howard, Harewood House, Kings Weston House, York House in Twickenham, Blenheim Palace and Stowe House.

[29] National Széchényi Library, Manuscript Collection, Quart. Germ. 1023, ff. 7v–8r.

the first independent Hungarian government during the 1848 revolution. His rank and wealth made him not only a natural choice for high diplomatic positions but also a bridgehead for other Hungarians travelling to Britain during his tenure as Ambassador. The guests at the Eisenstadt shootings were not only foreigners but also Hungarian magnates. The social network originating from these events helped Hungarian aristocrats to mix with foreign nobility that the rapidly developing country very much needed during the Reform Era when western ideas and expertise were imported to improve agriculture, industry, social and cultural institutions.

The guests at Eisenstadt were mainly diplomats and high-ranking politicians from all over Europe. Some of them were accredited to the Austrian court, while others were visiting Vienna during or after the Congress. Many of them were British due to the personal connections originating from the diplomatic missions to London by both Prince Miklós and his son, Prince Pál Antal. The extent of the Eisenstadt hunts can be fully appreciated from a letter by the politician Edward John Littleton (1791–1863), later 1st Baron Hatherton, to his friend and relative Colonel Wellesley in 1819. He wrote that 'You perhaps know that Hungary is considered one of the best sporting Countries in the world', and after describing the Prince's immense wealth with, he must have thought, hardly credible but probably reliable figures, he continued: 'You will easily conceive from all this that the Chasse at Eisenstadt was worth going to'.[30] No wonder that more than fifty British peers visited Eisenstadt in the following decades: members of the British mission in Vienna were regular guests, and the royal princes the Dukes of Cambridge and of Cumberland also enjoyed the Esterházys' hospitality in 1820 and 1822 respectively.

The Hungarian Counts and Countesses Zichy were also regular guests and they were present in Eisenstadt in 1816 when Lady Shelley wrote in her diary that 'six ugly women of the family of Zichy, two frightful men of the same family' completed the party.[31] One of them was Count Ferenc Zichy (1777–1839), assuming the name Zichy-Ferraris upon marrying a Countess Ferraris, who travelled to Britain a number of times. In 1837 his son, Count Emmanuel (1808–1877), married Charlotte Strachan (1815–1851), daughter of Admiral Sir Richard Strachan 6th Baronet and an heiress of the 3rd and last Marquess of Hertford. Such connections had a deep impact on Hungarian cultural life: Count Emmanuel transformed his chateau in a style recognised as of the Castle of Windsor to please his wife who eventually left him for another

[30] Staffordshire Record Office, D260/M/F/5/38

[31] R. Edgcumbe (ed.), *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley 1787–1817*, London: John Murray, 1912, 289.

Hungarian count. Prince Miklós Pál (1817–1894), the only son and heir of Prince Pál Antal Esterházy, also married a British lady, the daughter of the 5th Earl of Jersey. Although there is no trace of his travel notes, he might have been responsible for a sketchbook that recorded a few views of British country houses, among them the Duke of Wellington's Stratfield Saye House (Figure 7.1) and a room of Lady Jersey at Middleton Park (Figure 7.2).[32] These very strong personal connections explain travel destinations of Hungarian aristocrats in the British Isles and the evolving Anglomania that had an enormous effect on Hungarian public and particularly political thinking during the first half of the nineteenth century.

One of the biggest of all Anglomaniacs was Count István Széchenyi (1791–1860), son of the above mentioned Count Ferenc and a driving force of the reform movement in Hungary from 1825 until the Revolution in 1848, when he sat in the first Hungarian government together with Prince Pál Antal Esterházy. He travelled to Britain several times,[33] his first journey being in 1815 as a kind of a Grand Tour. He was a very young man then and only partly independent from his father's money, so he did not travel extensively. Outside London, he only went to Newmarket, a place that, as a keen sportsman and horse-breeder, he visited every time he went to England. He was introduced to the highest circles by the new ambassador and family friend, Prince Pál Antal Esterházy, and this is how he could go together with his countryman to the Duke of Bedford at Woburn Abbey or to the Regent's house in London. Count István Széchenyi and the Duke of Bedford met again in Eisenstadt in 1819 when Széchenyi started to be a regular guest there, but on that occasion Széchenyi also met with the above-mentioned Lord Hatherton, whose country seat at Teddesly Hall he visited in 1832 when on a journey to study bridges for the Hungarian capital's first permanent connection over the Danube between Pest and Buda, that is named after him today. The bridge was designed and constructed by the British and the designer, William Tierney Clark (1783–1852), was also a guest in Eisenstadt while in Hungary.

[32] Hungarian National Archives, P 115–III.–a–10.

[33] Count István Széchenyi's only recorded visit to a country house during his 1815 tour was to Woburn Abbey, but in 1822 he went to Audley End House, Bildeston House, Eaton Hall, Halkyn Hall, Bramham Park, Duncombe Park, Parlington Hall, Tickhill Castle House, Sandbeck Hall, Welbeck Abbey, Sherwood Hall, Chippenham Park, Euston Hall and Riddlesworth Hall. He had other interests during his 1832 tour but he found time to visit Middleton Park, Blenheim Palace, Soho House, Teddesley Hall, Beaudesert Hall and Ingestre Hall. He mostly stayed in London in 1834 and visited Shernfold Park and Aston Hall only.

The younger Széchenyi was much better connected to British society than his father and this is clearly expressed by the difference of their country house visits. The younger count could go to many places where he was invited and it is quite telling that he only visited Blenheim on his third tour to England, in 1832. He knew the English language well and his wealth also helped him in accessing and experiencing more than many of his countrymen. On his second journey in 1822 he was already his own master (as his father died two years before) and this can be seen on his travel route. He travelled together with his friend, Baron Miklós Wesselényi, but they sometimes took separate tours, partly because Széchenyi was invited to more places and did not always take Wesselényi with him. Széchenyi was quite laconic in his journal about his admiration of the country houses he saw, but Wesselényi, as a first time traveller to England, was very enthusiastic. The greenery and the tranquil setting of the houses particularly impressed him, as we have already seen in his exclamation of delight upon seeing Bildeston House. Wesselényi's romantic soul preferred the very naturalistic and plain scenery. When he visited the Duke of Rutland's Cheveley Park, close to Newmarket, his architectural taste is again clearly visible: 'The house is in the middle of the park – big, handsome. Nothing is artificial, no roads or walks are here, only unharmed and sound nature. Quiet calmness and fearlessness rules here ...'.[34] But he could also be very critical. When he visited Blenheim he was far from satisfied with everything he saw there; referring to Vanbrugh's bridge he writes that 'a large pompous bridge is very much scandalous'. He also disliked the house itself, declaring that it 'is magnificent and grand, but without taste; ... The interior is much nicer', and he goes on describing the rooms and galleries. The park, on the other hand, he very much approved, noting that it 'is indeed beautiful. Mighty giant trees spread their dark shadow over the most beautiful lawn. The most magnificent sights are opened to the chateau and the great lake from tiny valleys and hilltops. The colour scheme of the various trees are composed with the best taste'.[35] He also visited Nuneham Courtney that he found 'neither magnificent, nor beautiful', but his overall experience of the British country house was more than favourable. When they travelled back to London from their Yorkshire tour, they visited Welbeck Abbey and Wesselényi became very enthusiastic; 'Great place', he wrote and continued:

> 'The beautiful castle was built in the middle of a large green lawn, next to a light-coloured lake that appears like a mirror. The beautiful wide walk leads among flowering shrubs and giant trees, sometimes in the cool shade,

[34] *Báró Wesselényi*, p. 109.

[35] *Báró Wesselényi*, p. 114.

sometimes openly, with the most magnificent views to the castle and the lake. Real country houses are only in England, and enjoying country life to the full – only the English know how to do that!'[36]

Széchenyi was very much aware architecturally and a tireless observer of the British country house. He promoted many new architectural ideas, from gas lighting to the more comfortable spatial arrangement of country residences. Less than two months after his last visit to England in 1834, he started to write a treatise on architecture with the title 'Dust and Mud of Pest' that remained unpublished during his lifetime. Contrary what the title suggests, it was less about town planning but more concerned about domestic architecture. He drew base plans of country houses and architectural details in his journal while travelling, and he used his experiences to embellish his country house in Nagycenk and make it more comfortable (see also Chapter 5). Indeed, it was whilst planning alterations to his own house in the 1830s that his interest in British architecture becomes most evident. At Blenheim Palace, which he visited in 1832, he was most struck by the planting of the park, and summarised his excitement exclaiming: 'Magnificent Decadence'.[37] His mind must have been occupied with his plan to educate the Hungarian public about domestic architecture when in October 1832 he wrote praising Soho House near Birmingham and condemning Hungarian country houses in comparison: 'the most pleasant that man can see. No country house in Hungary, and not even in the Austrian Empire, can be compared to it'.[38] He went even further just a week later upon visiting Ingestre Hall and summarising his architectural impressions of his recent trip: 'What magnificent country houses! How stupidly live we on the Continent! And particularly in Hungary'.[39]

In contrast, the advancing romanticism did not find favour with Széchenyi – or at least there is hardly any sign of his appreciation of ruinous castles or wild landscapes. He did not even visit Windsor Castle, an easy target for many foreign visitors keen on apparent 'medievalism', and the only ruin he visited was Helmsley Castle in 1822. Even his father seems to have been more

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[36] *Báró Wesselényi*, p. 130. This 1822 tour was Wesselényi's only visit to England, and he saw the following country houses: Cheveley Park, Bildeston House, Blenheim Palace, Nuneham Courtney, Windsor Castle, Enville Hall, Bramham Park, Parlington Hall, Tickhill Castle House, Sandbeck Hall, Welbeck Abbey, Chippenham Park, Euston Hall, Rissledworth Hall.

[37] G. Viszota (ed.), *Gróf Széchenyi István naplói, IV. kötet (1830–1836)*, Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1934, p.306.

[38] Viszota, *Gróf Széchenyi István naplói*, p.326.

[39] Viszota, *Gróf Széchenyi István naplói*, p.336.

romantic, for he had ventured on a hike in the Peak District in 1787. Others, though, were more interested in romantic scenery. Count József Esterházy (1791–1847), just a year after having lost his 23-year-old wife, visited the British Isles and mostly stayed in the company of his distant cousin, Prince Pál Antal Esterházy, accompanying him also on a tour to Ireland as part of King George IV's historic visit there in 1821. He is the first known Hungarian to visit Kenilworth (increasingly popular with Dutch visitors – see Chapter 6), just a few months after Sir Walter Scott's novel with the same title came out.[40] Not surprisingly, perhaps, he also visited Windsor Castle and Warwick Castle, and also travelled to the Scottish Highlands to experience some of the picturesque qualities of the landscape there.[41]

Such visits became increasingly popular. As noted earlier, the political-minded intellectuals who eventually became leaders of the country in the later phase of the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence or during the second half of the nineteenth century, visited very few country houses and were more interested in romantic sites. Bertalan Szemere's only country house experience was at Blenheim, although he walked in the park of Burghley House, and visited the romantic scenes of Windsor Castle and Alnwick Castle in 1837.[42] István Gorove and Lőrinc Tóth travelled together in 1842, visiting the industrialist Edmund Ashworth's house, Egerton Hall, but the only real country house visit was to Castle Howard. Naturally, they visited romantic sites, too, making an excursion to the Scottish Highlands and to Penrhyn Castle in Wales, and strolling in the park of Windsor Castle. They are amongst the few ones who travelled to Ireland and saw Hillsborough Castle there.[43]

In contrast with other gentleman travellers who published their travel notes, the archaeologists and antiquarians Ferenc Pulszky (1814–1897) and his uncle, Gábor Fejérváry (1780–1851), were genuine country house tourists.[44] Pulszky not only inherited the great archaeological collection accumulated by Fejérváry, but was a collector himself. More importantly he decades

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[40] The change in the taste of country house destinations like Hardwick Hall and Kenilworth, and later Walter Scott's influence in the early 19th century is examined by Tinniswood, *Polite Tourist*, pp.121-129.

[41] He also visited Wollet Hall (now Loring Hall), Windsor Castle, Blenheim Palace, Warwick Castle, Bellevue House in Ireland, Buchanan Castle and Balloch Castle in Scotland, Burghley House, Cassiobury House and Bentley Priory.

[42] B. Szemere, *Utazás külföldön, 2. kötet: Nagy Britannia s Irland, Németalföld, Belgium, Rajnavidék, Helvétzia* (Buda: Magyar Királyi Egyetem: 1840).

[43] I. Gorove, *Nyugot: Utazás külföldön*, Vol. 2 (Pest: Heckenast, 1844); L. Tóth, *Uti tárcza. Ötödik füzet: Brittföld* (Pest: Landerer & Heckenast, 1844).

[44] [F. Pulszky,] *Aus dem Tagebuche eines in Grossbritannien reisenden Ungarn*, Pest: Heckenast, 1837.

later utilised his expertise to the service of his nation as director of the National Museum of Hungary and helping in the formation of such significant collections as the Museum of Fine Arts. The two men went on their western European journey in 1836 and visited many country houses; Pulszky also gave an account of their art collections and designed landscapes as well as the houses themselves. As true antiquarians, they walked to many historically important places and saw Kenilworth, Fountains Abbey and other popular sites considered of having picturesque qualities.[45]

As is evident by now, Hungarian aristocrats were increasingly involved in seeking out the romantic experience. By the 1830s their travel routes resembled those of the less privileged, but with the key difference that they could have access to houses which were not open to the public in general. Prince Pál Antal Esterházy was very helpful in arranging such visits. The young Protestant Transylvanian Count Ferenc Béldi and his mentor, Sándor Bölöni Farkas, were very far from Esterházy's circles but he gave them tickets to social events, arranged entry permissions to sensitive military sites and probably gave letters of recommendation to country houses.[46] They could visit places in the owner's absence and see every room they desired. They were looking for more romantic sites, which became the usual tourist destinations, but they also visited places that were not recorded by other Hungarian tourists like Belvoir Castle, Lumley Castle and Scone Palace.[47]

Another Anglomaniac, a friend of Széchenyi's and a generous supporter of his causes, Count György Károlyi (1802–1877), had his own strong personal connections to British peers. How these evolved is not known, but almost certainly using others' earlier links. By the 1830s he was a personal friend of the 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790–1858) and a cherished guest at Chatsworth where he spent nearly two weeks in October 1832, at one evening sitting next to the future Queen Victoria at supper. Although the records of his 1832 journey are partly missing, the surviving documents indicate that he was also experiencing the Scottish Highlands with a strong emphasis on country house visits, looking for the more romantic types like Stirling Castle.[48] Károlyi was fascinated by English architectural design and commissioned William

[45] They visited Windsor Castle, Blenheim Palace, Wilton House, Leigh Court, Piercefield Park, Warwick Castle, Powerscourt in Ireland, Newby Hall, Studley Royal, Duncombe Park and Castle Howard.

[46] S. Bölöni Farkas, *Nyugateurópai utazás*, Kolozsvár: Minerva, 1943.

[47] Besides these they also saw Burghley Park, Lambton Castle, Alnwick Castle, Dunsinane House and Dunkeld Castle.

[48] After Stirling Castle he visited Blair Castle, Tulloch Castle, Dunkeld Castle, Doune Castle and Rosslyn Castle

Tierney Clark to design a glasshouse (Figures 7.3 and &.4) for his palace in the capital city of Pest (the Károlyi Palace in downtown Pest). The glasshouse was never built, but one peculiar detail can still be seen in that palace that recalls his Anglomania: a series of sash window all along the upper floor of the garden facade in the main wing. These are the only known surviving examples of this window type in Hungary (Figure 7.5).[49] Naturally, the climate demanded double glazing that was executed with the usual continental fashion where the sheets of glass are around half a foot apart, meaning that two sashes were needed for every opening.

Conclusion

Aristocratic journeys to Britain and their records demonstrate the interest in and appreciation of the British country house during the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century. Notes on details such as heated hollow walls of gardens, which were unknown in the eastern parts of Europe, are extraordinary sources for understanding the perception of cultural differences in general and of British country residences in particular. Some of the architectural details never became popular because of their inappropriateness for the Hungarian circumstances; those which survived, however, are captivating proof of widespread Anglomania and the strong influence the British country house exerted in far-flung parts of Europe. British influence became widespread although not dominant in Hungarian country house architecture by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Hungarian aristocrats were very well connected to their British peers by the 1830s. In the Duke of Devonshire's Chiswick House the most numerous group of foreign dinner guests were Hungarian aristocrats (along with Russians) in the twenty-odd years before 1848.[50] They were guests: quite unlike the many visitors to Chatsworth House who were merely tourists, although the visitor books there record several European aristocrats, Hungarians included.[51] Chatsworth was accessible for tourists; other houses could be visited only by appointment or were not open at all to the public. A contemporary German travel guide warns that it took several extra months

before returning to England where he went to Chillingham Castle before arriving to Chatsworth.

[49] According to historical records, there were sash windows in the Széchenyi Chateau of Nagycenk as well, but they were removed long time ago

[50] The Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth House, CH16/2/7: Guest Lists, Chiswick and Kemp Town, 1812–1855.

[51] Károlyi's 1832 visit is not recorded, which hints at that the Duke's personal guests were treated differently.

to visit the houses of the richest due to limited access.[52] This chapter has shown that personal contacts helped Hungarian aristocrats to have access to many British country houses and that country house tourism remained a favourite pursuit among them, carried out as a long excursion from London. Around 1840 a Prince Esterházy family member, perhaps Princess Marie Leopoldine again, travelled to as many as thirty houses, recording only the names of visited country residences and architectural landmarks.[53] Following the defeat of the 1848–1849 Revolution and War of Independence, there were many aristocrats among those who fled Hungary, finding refuge in Britain. Meanwhile in a mental asylum, after his breakdown triggered by the lost national cause, Count István Széchenyi wrote a second preface for his book on town planning and domestic architecture that was published years after his death, in 1865.[54] It was reprinted a year later and he continued to influence his nation with his architectural observations based on his travels to Britain and experiences with the British country house.

Captions

Chart 7.1: Social background of Hungarian visitors to Britain and the number of aristocrats compared to the total number per year between 1837 and 1849 © Kristóf Fatsar

Figure 7.1: The 1st Duke of Wellington's country seat, Stratfield Saye House, probably by Miklós 9th Prince Esterházy in 1836 © Hungarian National Archives

Figure 7.2: Interieur of Lady Jersey's suite at Middleton Park, probably by Miklós 9th Prince Esterházy in 1836 © Hungarian National Archives

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[52] Neigebauer, *Handbuch*, p. 18.

[53] These were Hatfield House, Woburn Abbey, Wrest Park, Ashridge House, Chiswisk House, the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, Windsor Castle, Hampton Court, Cassiobury House, Syon House, Kew Palace, Buccleuch House (Montagu Villa) in Richmond, Gunnersbury Park, Chatsworth House, Alnwick Castle, Dalkeith Palace, Abbotsford House, Hopetoun House, Kinfauns Castle, Taymouth Castle, Blair Castle, Finlarig Castle, Stirling Castle, Hamilton Palace, Eaton Hall, Warwick Castle and Blenheim Palace (Hungarian National Archives, P 115–III.–a–7, ff. 71–72).

[54] I. Széchenyi, Pesti por és sár, in *Töredékek gróf Széchenyi István fennmaradt kéziratairól* 2, ed. J. Török (Pest: Heckenast, 1866), pp. 1–138.

Figure 7.3: Dome of the unrealised conservatory in the garden of the Károlyi Palace in Pest, designed by William Tierney Clark in 1833 © Architectural Collection of Kiscell Museum / Budapest History Museum

Figure 7.4: Front elevation of the gardener's house, attached to the back of the conservatory in the garden of the Károlyi Palace in Pest. Neither half of the complex building, designed by William Tierney Clark in 1833, have been realised, but it is worth noting the cutting edge technology of the glass architecture (see in the background and in detail in Figure 7.3) combined with fashionable Tudor style architecture with fittingly elaborate chimneys. © Architectural Collection of Kiscell Museum / Budapest History Museum

Figure 7.5: Double sash window on the first floor of the Károlyi Palace in Pest, facing the courtyard, in the room used as a study by Count György Károlyi © Kristóf Fatsar